

PRINCE BISMARCK AND HIS MEMOIRS

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in his path or criticized his character and policy. Germany is poorer in political memoirs than England or France; but this massive autobiography finds a place in the first class of this category, yielding in interest and importance, so far as Germany is concerned, to the *Reflections and Collections* of Bismarck alone.

The figure of William I, full of life and colour, is continually on the stage, and every chapter of the first two volumes contains incidents and comments which help us to visualize him as he appeared to the brilliant Minister. The abiding impression which we carry away is that he never grew up. It reads—and is obviously meant to read—like the story of a tactful tutor struggling to educate an exceptionally gifted; high-spirited and impulsive pupil. On his fall the Prince handed back the hundreds of letters which he had received from the last of the Hohenzollerns ; but we hardly seem to miss them, so abundant is the material provided by the author and other intimates of the *enfant terrible*: His complicated nature could only be understood by those who knew him well, and for that reason the picture drawn in such a well-known book as Count Zedlitz's *Twelve Years at the Kaiser's Court* is unconvincing. The best approach is through Johannes Haller's fascinating life of Eulenburg, and the picture drawn in the biography of the Kaiser's best friend is confirmed by the pen of the fallen Chancellor.

When Billow was summoned in 1897 to succeed Marschall von Bieberstein as Foreign Secretary, the sun was shining brightly in the heavens. He belonged to one of the oldest and most distinguished of Prussian families ; his father had been Foreign Minister in the seventies ; unlike Marschall, he had never quarrelled with the Bismarcks ; during twenty years at

Paris and St. Petersburg, Bucharest and Rome,
 he had learned
 the arts and crafts of diplomacy ; his ready wit,
 wide culture,
 and personal charm were known to all; his
 gifted and de-
 lightful^ wife* a superb musician, was
 connected with Min-
 ghetti and other leading Italian families ; he
 was only forty-
 eight and in excellent health; he was the friend
 of Eulenburg,
 who at that time possessed the Kaiser's ear
 and who had
 helped to secure his appointment; he was a
persona grata to
 Hohenlohe, the veteran Chancellor, to
 Holstein, the un-
 crowned King of the Foreign Office, and above
 all to the
 Kaiser himself.

The international situation was not without its
 difficulties,